Opportunities Girl Scouting Offers College Women

for

Volunteer Leadership

GIRL SCOUTS, Inc.
670 LEXINGTON AVE.
NEW YORK CITY

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(An address given at the fifteenth Annual Meeting of the National Council of Girl Scouts)

I believe your Committee on Program erred this morning in not asking a poet rather than a pedagogue to speak at this opening session. Here among the Rocky Mountains on the Continental Divide, with our eyes looking eastward to the Atlantic margins of our country, and westward to the Pacific shores, with our imaginations raised during this morning's program to think of girlhood in Vienna and in Budapest and in Prague, and in far distant corners of this world, it isn't easy to come back to this assembly hall in a hotel in Colorado Springs and speak to such a subject as "The Opportunity for College

Women to Exercise Volunteer Leadership in the Girl Scouts."

When Mrs. Choate was reminding us of those five elemental commandments of Lord Baden-Powell, that a Girl Scout should have character and handicraft, and health, happiness and service, I wondered if anybody—even coming over the mountains from California—could add a whit to the profound significance of that message to women who are college women or otherwise, to women who are leaders of girlhood.

Character is the sum of knowledge, and the application of it to our lives;

And handicraft—that is a wise old lesson that has been taught human beings from the earliest days;

And health—what can we do without it? The philosophers of every nation have told us that only in a body that is really whole can a mind and spirit dwell wholly;

And happiness—that is something that never comes by searching, but is in itself an outcome of the service that is the last thing the Great Scout Leader demands of all of us.

And yet I suppose I must try to interpret anew your will toward girlhood. I must interpret anew the uses of girlhood in national life, and I must say over again, if I can, and more strongly than others have

said it, what girlhood and national life have to do with the welfare of this planet.

Where to begin? Leadership—let's begin there. I suppose you know that leadership hasn't existed very long among women anywhere. Leadership has been, for eons, the prerogative of the brethren. Leadership has belonged to men because leadership came from might, strength; and strength and might were originally physical strength and might, and then later the strength and might of wealth and land and inherited rights through royal or class organization.

Only when man conceived that democratic organization of society might be possible; only when mankind began to adventure in democratic living did women have a chance, because democracy has enabled individuals to rise from poverty to riches, to rise through character, knowledge and service into places of authority; and in your day and mine there come the women in power and in authority.

What is the reason? I will mention two or three. One is that we must salute and thank the scientific searchers out of truth, for they have taught us things about health, about our bodies. And women who have borne and reared children through thou-

sands of years, knowing little of biology, have naturally been slaves of their job, slaves of the great and important task of maternity, slaves of the task of teaching the childhood of the race; slaves who planted the corn and reaped the harvest, who wove the grasses and worked with the skins of animals that they could be used as covering; slaves who built the little igloos of the Eskimo or the little straw huts of the Polynesians.

The women have borne these great burdens, and science has taken the burdens from us. It has saved our babies, it has made us able to live longer and stand straighter, and work more freely while we live. Agriculture is doing the planting and the harvesting with machinery. Architects and skilled workmen are using steel and concrete, and they don't need our grass huts any more. Even as recently as the history of our own country, even as recently as the twenties and thirties and forties of this last century, the newly discovered cotton gin, the sewing machine of Mr. Holt, and experiments with drying and canning food, stopped forever spinning wheels and hand looms, put out the fires in thousands of kitchens and sent us out to be leaders in another job.

Science has brought us leisure, and leisure is potential of great good and great evil. Leisure—what are we going to do with it, women who are college women, and women who are not college women? Colleges are the result of this leisure. Of course you know that, don't you? Whoever thought of women going into college until there wasn't so much to do at home? Then to save themselves, the brethren had to find something safe for us, so they organized places where we could go to school, places where we could go to college. After you send a woman to school and to college she begins to have knowledge. That knowledge begins to burgeon and to grow and she has to use it. She is going out to be a doctor and a lawyer and a merchant and a chief. She is going out to be a citizen in the community, to be a builder and a maker beyond as well as within the home. Yes, leisure has taken away the task of Rebecca, beloved of Jacob; the water is piped into the house.

Leisure has taken away the work of Nausicaa, the daughter of Alcinous—the lovely Nausicaa who was doing the family washing when Odysseus got home from Troy. Those linen pools have become Maytag, and some of us are thankful that the

laundry is a part of the invisible mechanism of a well-organized household.

Leisure has taken away the work of Priscilla, beloved of John Alden and Miles Standish. It has even taken away the work of Pocahontas who made wampum and pelicum.

Think how many romantic things it has taken away, and it has given you your leisure. What are you going to do with it? Leisure to learn, leisure to gain knowledge and to use, leisure to apply learning to life!

I am not one who forgets that knowledge has fallen upon a good many barren male minds, no doubt of it. Knowledge, too, has been worn by many a woman as merely a ribbon to stick in her coat, or as a pin of one design or another, sometimes with mystical letters of which she herself has no understanding, a kind of symbol of mystery for the information which she isn't using. But that is no excuse for her dereliction, her idleness, because her leisure is potential of good.

Now, then, college is the opportunity for training in all fields of contemporary activity, training that makes us ready to preside over a household, a home, over that organization which is the family and which is the corner stone of national and racial life. But

it gives us also the knowledge that makes us able to preside over an organization in Colorado Springs or in Prague, to preside over professional tasks, a business, a governmental office.

Think of the women who, in recent years, have become leaders. I will just name a few to remind you. There is Florence Allen, out in Ohio, a judge of remarkable wisdom and dignity and value. There is Genevieve Cline they have just sent from Cleveland, Ohio, to become an associate justice in New York City having to do with customs, the first time a woman has ever done a thing like that. Like a Pike's Peak of the East they have put up a medical building on the Hudson and they put a woman in charge of the great research bureau that has to do with that frightful enemy of modern life, sleeping sickness. I but take your time trying to remind you of the women who have become leaders. Yes, a woman has been governor in Wyoming, and did it very well. Another woman was governor in another place and didn't do it very well.

I suppose our brethren are going to learn, and I hope we are going to learn it first, that just because we are women is no proof we are going to do our job excellently. It is

one reason we are trying to do it excellently, but sex is no guarantee of excellence.

Leadership is coming. It is not welcomed in every field, but it is coming. Just so long and so far as each of us lead excellently will we be worthy of the task, and will the road be smoothed for the women that shall come tomorrow, and the day after that.

I think of the college women in your midst. Of course, I know there are thousands of them. Seventy-two per cent of your workers are college women. Isn't that wonderful? I think of your beloved Sarah Louise Arnold. I think of Elizabeth Kemper Adams, and I think of my neighbor, Lou Henry Hoover. They have come into the organization with what they learned in their collegiate years, and it has enriched their gift to you.

Girlhood, that is the third point of my subject. Girlhood in its potentiality today, what a wonderful generation it is! I suppose the world was never gayer, was never more hilarious. Human beings never flew so high upon wings, nor dived so deep beneath the waters, and carried their moving films not only into Prague but down into the ocean beds and photographed what was going on there.

Wilkins carries freight over the North Pole and Byrd takes a whole happy cruising party down to the South Pole. Why, girlhood and boyhood are today not only heirs of the ages but heirs of the universe. They own the stars in their courses. What are they going to do with their inheritance?

You see there is that other question because they are inheriting so much that they need to do nothing but look on. There was never a time when the individual life could profit so completely by the creations of others. The research laboratory man who works through his life at some biological fact may make you and me immune to typhoid and smallpox, and everything else. We forget his name and live an unscarred and long and joyous life because he has freed us from disease.

Then we have these mechanical folk who have harnessed the power in the streams of the mountains and have brought it as light into this hotel, and as heat; who make motion possible and all the comforts of human life. We touch a button. We don't even have to curry a horse or feed a creature, or do anything—punch a button, and be ungrateful.

To me that is the greatest problem of youth. How create the sense of reciprocal

responsibility that can be, if it will, without fear of tomorrow, possessed of all the powers of nature harnessed for its pleasure; that is possessed without even study of the crafts that come from knowledge which Aristotle and Plato and Archimedes didn't have in days of old? An individual may be vacuous, may be useless, may, indeed, instead of being a wholesome enjoyer, be a destroyer.

Let us envisage what can be done. In my state a girl flips an unquenched cigarette and a thousand acres of priceless redwood are burned. In Montana not long ago a fire thirty miles across went through the state from just a careless dropping of something that had been enjoyed as a little recreational act by a young person.

Responsible? Oh, no! One touches some mechanism in an airplane right over this city the other day and takes out the life of two of the younger generation. It was done in fun, in misunderstanding, in carelessness, but human life is victimized by that. Or a feeble-minded idiot plays with a machine gun and a community can be wiped out.

There used to be an association between intelligence and power. It isn't necessarily so today. Don't you see, then, that those

who have to do with youth have this tremendous job of giving, of imparting and training an intelligence commensurate with the power that is inherited by all who are born? That is your problem.

I take it that adolescence is very little concerned with problems of politics or economics. Both of these are the technical application of a knowledge of group relationships, or of business and commercial relationships. I have to put them out of our talk today. Social or human relationships are the problem that is first in the life of an adolescent. I take it, as I add up those five admonitions of Lord Baden-Powell, that it sums up or puts in a word the function of this organization for youth. Your job, then, as leaders among Girl Scouts is a social job. It is the establishing of human relations. My! How important that is. It cuts right across.

Your report this morning revealed a relationship so complex, so many-sided, that it cuts across church, race, government, nationality, school and college, and establishes a relationship which will answer honorably and democratically the girls' attitude toward wealth and poverty, toward race origin, toward origin of country or city, toward all of the complex sides and aspects

of modern life. It is the living answer to these things. That is what we are trying to do.

I suppose the teachers of every generation have, in a word, established a way of life for the youth of that generation. Isn't it so that the Girl Scout movement is endeavoring to establish a way of life among the girlhood of this nation, and to those with a vision among the girlhood of all nations? I wish we could glimpse the significance of what this means.

Leaving this room for a minute, leaving any particular city for a minute, leaving 1928 for a minute, when in the history of the world have peoples been related except by some sort of diplomatic messenger, some sort of armed relationship to save a people from another, some sort of tenuous business relationship—when the Carthaginians came up with the Canaanites and made business 3000 years ago, or when the Phoenicians sailed the inner seas and carried spices and silks 2000 years ago, or when the Vikings 1000 years ago came down from the North—take any era you choose and answer it for yourself. What were the relations worked out as a way of life in that time? The relations were largely masculine.

largely military, governmental or commercial.

Yet today idealists, women who are Girl Scout leaders, go around the world to salute maidenhood, thirty-nine countries, and to say, "Although you speak in a tongue descended from the Latin folk, although you speak in a tongue descended from those mysterious, ancient people of Asia, although you come from the later dwellers upon the earth, the Saxons or the Angles, the Teutons, whatever they may be, we are sisters, not satirically nor ironically under our skins, but in our minds and in our hearts."

Girl Scout leaders are creating an inclusive sisterhood. May it grow into a womanhood making this planet a happier place to live upon. There shall be not clashing of arms but choruses of praise. There shall be worship of God in many languages and through many rituals, and in the noble hymns of many peoples, and a striving for a way of life that is not a way of death.

Girl Scout leaders will hold in their hearts this truth, "In all lands nobility and happiness have come through great teachers who through the example of their lives and the wisdom of their minds have created a way of life for their generation. Our forefathers did no less, but we shall do more than these.

We shall create a way of life that shall apply to all peoples under the sun. It shall be women who will aid in this great achievement, that not only our girlhood but the girlhood throughout the earth may have character, handicraft, health and happiness, and serve throughout the world the joy and welfare of humanity."